oversight and hold hearings to keep VA officials accountable and transparent to Congress, veterans, and the American public.

Furthermore, I believe, now more than ever, it is time for Congress to take legislative action to fix one of the biggest challenges at the VA—the disability claims backlog.

Despite opportunities for improvement, 293,000 veterans Nationwide and 3,700 veterans in Nevada have waited over 125 days for their claims to be processed so they can get the compensation they have earned and the VA medical care they desperately need.

To address this issue I introduced the VA Backlog Working Group March 2014 Report, along with a bipartisan group of Senators, including Senators CASEY, MORAN, HEINRICH, VITTER, and TESTER. This report outlines the claims process, explains the history of the VA's claims backlog, and offers targeted solutions to help the VA develop an efficient and accurate benefits delivery system that will ensure our veterans will never again have to wait more than 125 days to receive a decision on their claims.

What our working group found was that the process is not only complex, but the backlog has been a consistent problem for more than two decades, largely because the VA is using a 1945 process in the 21st century. I sent every Member of this Chamber a copy of this report and encourage my colleagues to take a look at it to understand how we got to where we are today and what it will take to fix the claims process permanently.

To put this report's targeted solutions into action, our working group introduced the 21st Century Veterans Benefit Delivery Act. This comprehensive, bipartisan piece of legislation addresses three areas of the claims process: claims submission, VA regional office practices, and Federal agency responses to VA requests.

I thank my colleagues—Senators CASEY, MORAN, HEINRICH, VITTER, TESTER, MURKOWSKI, CARDIN, WARREN, KLOBUCHAR, WARNER, TOOMEY, THUNE, ROBERTS, and PRYOR—for joining me to address this very critical issue.

I recognize because the claims process is complex and there is no silver bullet that is going to solve this problem overnight, the VA's current efforts will not eliminate this backlog. It is commonsense, targeted solutions from Congress that will address some of the inefficiencies keeping veterans from receiving a timely decision.

That is why this bill has been endorsed by a number of veterans service organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, and the Association of the United States Navy. I thank these VSOs for their support and collaborating with the working group to develop solutions to fix this problem.

Time and again we have asked our men and women in uniform to answer the call of duty, and they do so without hesitation. Ensuring veterans receive disability benefits and quality VA medical care in a timely manner is the least we can do to thank them for their service.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, it is my role and responsibility to get answers for Nevada's veterans, and I will uphold that commitment to oversight.

In the coming weeks I will be watching the VA closely for changes and improvements to mitigate the very serious lapse in care and services that have occurred. If the VA continues on the course it is currently on, then I think it is time to look for changes at the highest level.

Again, I thank all of our veterans—including the nearly 300,000 that call Nevada home—for defending this country and for preserving Americans' liberties. Their commitment and sacrifice will not be forgotten nor taken for granted.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

LETTER TO THE NFL

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to thank my colleagues who have signed on to a letter to the NFL asking that they change the name of the Washington football team. I also thank Leader REID for his leadership on this issue and for trying to accentuate the care and concern he has for 22 tribes in the State of Nevada and their interest in seeing the dignity and respect of those tribes with the name change as well.

I also come to the floor and ask my colleagues who have not signed to sign on to a letter asking the NFL to take action as aggressively as the NBA took action and to move on this issue. I will be sending a letter to each of my colleagues asking them to either sign on to this letter or to write their own letter, as one of our colleagues did. I am convinced that if each Member of this body speaks on this issue and is forceful in their resolve, we can help initiate change.

I know not everybody in America may understand why this is so important. Having personally worked with 29 tribes in the State of Washington, and for a short period of time having served as the chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, and having been a Member of that my entire time in the Senate—this may not even be the top issue in Indian Country. We certainly have understaffed hospitals, challenging school situations, decaying infrastructure challenges, and concerns about fishing rights—whether they are the challenges that ocean acidification has to our fishing ability in the Pacific Northwest or whether it is in Alaska making sure that Alaska Natives who are on subsistence fishing are able to continue to do what they do.

There are many issues in what we refer to as Indian Country that are about the health, safety, and welfare of those individuals. Yet this issue is a reminder to all of us that intolerance in our communities is a problem.

We are here to say that we respect these tribal entities that have requested this name change. We are saying that we have a trust responsibility with these organizations and these individual tribes.

So when the National Congress of American Indians—an organization that represents millions of Americans with Native American backgrounds—calls for a change, the fact that we ignore that is a disrespect to those tribal entities.

There are many organizations across the United States of America who have joined this battle as well: the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the New York State Assembly, the National Congress of American Indians, the DC city council, the Prince George's County council. Even the President of the United States has spoken out on this issue.

So what is it going to take to get the name of this team changed? I say to my colleagues that even the Patent Office—the Federal agency determining whether a word can be protected in commerce—has said this term is derogatory slang and is disparaging to Native Americans.

We believe Commissioner Goodell should act; that he needs to do what the NBA did and make sure that one of their owners puts an end to the wrong use of a football term and to join the right side of history. We are not going to give up this battle.

Similarly, like organizations who have a Web site on changethemascot.org—which is a great 2-minute to 3-minute video of why Native Americans care so much about this issue—we need to continue to respect the dignity of these individuals, and it is time to update the relationship.

Yesterday at the White House there was an unbelievable ceremony, of which I am of course very proud of—the welcoming of the world champion Seahawks football team. They were walking into the White House where many Native Americans from the State of Washington were all decked out in Seahawks gear. I don't know if it was protocol for the White House. Even though they said nobody was to take pictures, telling a crowd from Seattle not to use digital devices is pretty hard to accomplish.

But there they were—Native Americans from our State who are partners with the Seattle Seahawks. They are advertising partners. They are suite owners. They advertise and participate together. The logo of the Seahawks was designed by a Native American. That is the relationship of the NFL and Native Americans today in the Pacific Northwest. Juxtapose that to here in

the Washington, DC, area where many people have spoken out and yet the owner remains in opposition of changing a name that has been clear to him is found to be racially offensive to Native Americans.

So we are here today to ask our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join us. Join us because it was hard to unite our side, but I know with a few of their voices we can move this issue further.

Why is tolerance so important? In the words of Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations:

> Tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where people are becoming more and more closely interconnected.

While that is a global view of the challenge we face, we need to practice that in reality here. That is why I was so happy we passed the Violence Against Women Act with a provision in it making sure that women in Indian Country would also be protected. We have to ask ourselves why did it take us so long to get that provision.

Even the U.N. Special Envoy on Indigenous Rights for Peoples around the world, James Anaya, also said that the NFL should change, basically saying it is a hurtful reminder and represents a long history of mistreatment in the United States of America. He cited the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

> They use stereotypes to obscure the understanding and reality of Native Americans today and instead help to keep alive a racially discriminatory attitude.

So even the U.N., the world community, is calling on this community to deal with this issue and we should act. I hope my colleagues will help us in this effort to get the NFL to do the right thing.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

BARRON NOMINATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. There has been considerable discussion on the floor about the nominee to the First Circuit, David Barron, that has hinged around his tenure in the Office of Legal Counsel and an opinion he wrote specifying the outer bounds of Presidential authority in the area of defending our national security against Americans who have signed up with organizations that do us harm. I wish briefly to bring to the attention of this Chamber that it is not the only issue with respect to David Barron and the Office of Legal Counsel.

The Office of Legal Counsel has indeed had a scandal, and it is indeed related to David Barron, but it is related to David Barron in the best possible way, in that he is the one who cleaned up the scandal. The scandal in question—the Presiding Officer is a former attorney general of her State and she will understand this very clearly—the scandal in question related to the shabby opinions that were written by the Office of Legal Counsel to justify the torture program that was run by the Bush administration. When I say shabby, these were awful opinions. They were hidden from most peer scrutiny because they would not have stood up to peer scrutiny. They made errors as basic as failing to cite Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decisions right on point.

There actually had been an incident in which the Department of Justice, where the Office of Legal Counsel is located, prosecuted a Texas sheriff for waterboarding victims in order to get confessions out of them. He was prosecuted as a criminal. He was convicted. The case went to the Fifth Circuit on appeal and in the course of their written decision on appeal, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals of the United States—one row below the U.S. Supreme Court—described the technique of water torture that was used, the waterboarding, and on a dozen separate occasions used the word ''torture'' to describe what was being done.

Look for that case in the Office of Legal Counsel. Look for that case in the opinion of Office of Legal Counsel about whether torture is accomplished by waterboarding, whether waterboarding is torture. It is not there. They didn't even cite the case. It was a case they could have found in their own files because the Department of Justice was the organization that had prosecuted this sheriff as a criminal for that act.

If you wanted to bring it up as a case and try to find a way to distinguish it, I could accept that. I probably would disagree with that analysis, but the failure to even cite the case, knowing how difficult it would be for the torture program to go forward, I think is a sign of either the worst kind of incompetence or a deliberate fix being put into the opinion of the Office of Legal Counsel.

Having served as a U.S. attorney as well, I think the Department of Justice should have the best lawyers in the country, and within the Department of Justice the OLC prides itself on being the best of the best. It was a disgraceful departure of that standard when the torture opinions were allowed to pass. They simply don't meet any reasonable test of adequacy. So on April 15, 2009, the Department of Justice withdrew the Office of Legal Counsel's CIA interrogation opinions. The memorandum for the Attorney General effecting that withdrawal was signed by none other than David Barron. This was the instance of a man who absolutely did the right thing. He helped clean up a terrible mess that had been left at the Department of Justice. We should be proud of the conduct of David Barron at the Office of Legal Counsel.

I ask unanimous consent that the 1-page memorandum for the Attorney General signed by David Barron be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WITHDRAWAL OF OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL CIA INTERROGATION OPINIONS

Four previous opinions of the Office of Legal Counsel concerning interrogations by the Central Intelligence Agency are withdrawn and no longer represent the views of the Office.

APRIL 15, 2009.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Sections 3(a) and 3(b) of Executive Order 13491 (2009) set forth restrictions on the use of interrogation methods. In section 3(c) of that Order, the President further directed that ''unless the Attorney General with appropriate consultation provides further guidance, officers, employees, and other agents of the United States Government may not, in conducting interrogations, rely upon any interpretation of the law governing interrogation . . . issued by the Department of Justice between September 11, 2001, and January 20, 2009.'' That direction encompasses, among other things, four opinions of the Office of Legal Counsel: Memorandum for John Rizzo, Acting General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, from Jay S. Bybee, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Interrogation of al Qaeda Operative (Aug. 1, 2002); Memorandum for John A. Rizzo, Senior Deputy General Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency, from Steven G. Bradbury, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Application of 18 U.S.C. §§2340–2340A to Certain Techniques That May Be Used in the Interrogation of a High Value al Qaeda Detainee (May 10, 2005); Memorandum for John A. Rizzo, Senior Deputy General Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency, from Steven G. Bradbury, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Application of 18 U.S.C. §§234–2340A to the Combined Use of Certain Techniques in the Interrogation of High Value al Qaeda Detainees (May 10, 2005); and Memorandum for John A. Rizzo, Senior Deputy General Counsel, Central Intelligence Agency, from Steven G. Bradbury, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Application of United States Obligations Under Article 16 of the Convention Against Torture to Certain Techniques that May be Used in the Interrogation of High Value al Qaeda Detainees (May 30, 2005).

In connection with the consideration of these opinions for possible public release, the Office has reviewed them and has decided to withdraw them. They no longer represent the views of the Office of Legal Counsel.

DAVID J. BARRON,
Acting Assistant Attorney General.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—H.R. 4031 and S. 1982

Mr. RUBIO. Thank you, Madam President.

I am here on the floor today to talk about an issue that has received a tremendous amount of attention, and